

Community Affairs Reference Committee  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO  
INQUIRY INTO HEARING HEALTH IN AUSTRALIA

12 October 2009

Question no: 1

OUTCOME 7: Hearing Services

Topic: HEARING HEALTH IN AUSTRALIA

Hansard Page: CA 10

Senator Moore (Acting Chair) asked:

What falls underneath that heading 'Charitable Institutions' in this area? You have mentioned a couple of times a particular role for charitable institutions. Who falls under that?

Answer:

An indicative list of organisations is provided below.

Organisations providing support for cochlear implants:

- Sydney Cochlear Implant Centre (SCIC)
- Ear Foundation (University of Sydney) - is in the process of combining with SCIC
- Shepherd Centre in Sydney - covering New South Wales;
- Hear and Say in Brisbane – covering Queensland;
- Lions Institute (WA)
- Variety (SA)

Organisations providing access to hearing devices:

Hearing Aid Banks fit hearing aids for free or at reduced cost to people who are not eligible for the Australian Government Hearing Services Program. Each service has its own eligibility criteria and generally fit reconditioned hearing aids, except in the Northern Territory where new aids are also fitted.

- Better Hearing Australia – Victoria – Victoria.
- H.E.A.R Services (Vicdeaf) – Victoria.
- Self Help for Hard of Hearing – New South Wales.
- Princess Alexandra Hospital – Queensland.
- Deafness Association – Northern Territory.
- The Central Aboriginal Congress – Northern Territory.
- Royal Adelaide Hospital – South Australia.

Organisations providing community access services:

These supply and advocate for the use of modifications to digital and audiovisual media to make them accessible to hearing and visually impaired people.

- Australian Communications Exchange – national - includes the National Relay Service
- Media Access Australia – national

Organisations facilitating community participation and social inclusion:

- Deaf Sports Australia – branches in each State and Territory
- Quota International - local branches across Australia

Organisations engaged in self-help, mutual support and advocacy:

- Able Australia – formerly the Deafblind Association of Australia
- Better Hearing Australia - branches in all States
- Deafness Council of NSW
- Deaf Society of NSW
- Self Help for Hard of Hearing People (SHHH)
- Victorian Deaf Society (VicDeaf)

Organisations supporting hearing-impaired children and their families:

Each of these offers a range of support services, including counselling, information and advocacy and in some cases education.

- Deaf Children Australia – fosters Auslan & bilingual English-Auslan communication
- The Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children – Australia-wide internet-based distance education program. Fosters Auslan & bilingual English-Auslan communication.
- Senses Foundation Inc. – Provides multidisciplinary and family-oriented early intervention services to deafblind infants and young children.
- The Alliance for Deaf Children – has membership organisations in each Australian state and New Zealand. Each of these organisations provides exclusively auditory-based language services for deaf and hearing-impaired children, has a focus on early intervention, is parent founded (or has a significant involvement of parents). These organisations include:
  - Taralye covering Victoria
  - Telethon Speech and Hearing covering Western Australia
  - Cora Barclay covering South Australia
  - Shepherd Centre covering New South Wales
  - Hear and Say covering Queensland
  - The Hearing House covering New Zealand.

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Question no: 2

OUTCOME 7: Hearing Services

Topic: HEARING HEALTH IN AUSTRALIA

Hansard Page: CA 3

Senator Moore asked:

Can you take it on notice to get a structure of your unit and the standard staffing of that?

Answer:

The Office of Hearing Services currently has 59 ASL (Average Staff Level), including 10 audiologists. The branch consists of four sections and Attachment A provides a brief description of the responsibilities of each. The Clinical Support Section, in which the audiologists work, is mostly based in the Queensland, Victorian and Western Australian Offices of the Department. All other staff are located in Central Office.

Audiological staff within the Office are responsible for:

- site audits and clinical file reviews of contracted service providers;
- providing clinical expertise to practitioners;
- resolving complex complaints with clients and service providers; and
- providing advice on device specifications and other the technical aspects of the Deed of Standing Offer with hearing aid manufacturers.

**Office of Hearing Services**

**ATTACHMENT A**

**National Manager**  
Executive

**Quality Assurance Section**

- Management of Provider Contract including compliance
- Accreditation approvals
- Professional qualification approvals and registration
- Management of MOU with professional bodies

**Strategies & Support Section**

- Hearing Services Advisory Committee Secretariat
- Advise on Neonatal Hearing Screening
- Management of the Hearing Loss Prevention Program
- Management of the Australian Hearing MOU regarding the CSO Program

**Business Liaison & Client Services Section**

- Communications & Information
- Research/Special Projects
- Client Information Call Centre
- Applications processing and voucher issue
- Service Provider claiming and advice
- Program IT development and support

**Clinical Support Section**

- Complaints resolution
- Advice on clinical issues
- Complex client issues
- Conducting of Site Audits and follow up
- Regular review of Deed of Standing Offer and advice on device specifications

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Question no: 3

OUTCOME 7: Hearing Services

Topic: HEARING HEALTH IN AUSTRALIA

Hansard Page: CA 4

Senator Boyce asked:

The Access Economics report has been referred to a couple of times in other people's submissions. Who commissioned that study?

Answer:

The Access Economics *Listen Hear! The economic access and costs of hearing loss in Australia Report 2006*, was funded by the Cooperative Research Centre for Cochlear Implant and Hearing Aid Innovation (CRC Hear) and the Victorian Deaf Society (Vicdeaf).

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Question no: 4

OUTCOME 7: Hearing Services

Topic: HEARING HEALTH IN AUSTRALIA

Hansard Page: CA 20

Senator Williams asked:

My concentration is on prevention. Has there been a positive result over the years because of different attitudes to workplaces when working around machinery et cetera?

Answer:

The Department was unable to source data linking a reduction in the incidence of work related noise induced hearing loss to prevention activities.

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Question no: 5

OUTCOME 7: Hearing Services

Topic: HEARING HEALTH IN AUSTRALIA

Hansard Page: CA 4

Senator Moore asked:

Can we get a breakdown, somewhere, of the age groups and numbers and how that is expected to change?

Answer:

The Department can provide the Access Economics *Listen Hear! The economic access and costs of hearing loss in Australia Report 2006*, which provides projected prevalence by age group (at [Attachment A](#)). The Department currently does not produce data on prevalence.

## Attachment A

**Table 1** Projected Prevalence to 2050, hearing loss by age and gender (worse ear)

	<b>2010</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2030</b>	<b>2040</b>	<b>2050</b>
0-14	5,169	5,172	5,485	5,641	5,666
15-50	421,342	445,681	467,100	482,545	490,521
51-60	576,870	640,697	658,937	732,307	796,023
61-70	647,254	818,532	918,172	952,498	1,066,189
71+	754,295	1,108,569	1,561,295	1,972,989	2,279,112
<b>Total Males</b>	<b>2,404,931</b>	<b>3,018,651</b>	<b>3,610,989</b>	<b>4,145,979</b>	<b>4,637,510</b>
% of males	22.5%	25.4%	27.8%	29.8%	31.5%
% total prev	59.9%	59.4%	58.9%	58.8%	59.1%
0-14	4,902	4,897	5,196	5,342	5,365
15-50	134,824	141,047	146,729	151,263	153,500
51-60	223,920	247,008	250,145	271,674	294,065
61-70	540,658	708,334	785,254	798,717	870,653
71+	708,430	961,171	1,336,139	1,674,760	1,891,162
<b>Total Females</b>	<b>1,612,734</b>	<b>2,062,458</b>	<b>2,523,463</b>	<b>2,901,756</b>	<b>3,214,744</b>
% of females	14.3%	17.3%	19.4%	20.8%	21.9%
% total prev	40.1%	40.6%	41.1%	41.2%	40.9%
0-14	10,071	10,069	10,681	10,983	11,031
15-50	556,167	586,728	613,829	633,807	644,021
51-60	800,790	887,705	909,082	1,003,982	1,090,087
61-70	1,187,912	1,526,866	1,703,426	1,751,215	1,936,841
71+	1,462,726	2,069,740	2,897,434	3,647,748	4,170,273
<b>Total Persons</b>	<b>4,017,664</b>	<b>5,081,109</b>	<b>6,134,452</b>	<b>7,047,735</b>	<b>7,852,253</b>
% of persons	18.7%	21.4%	23.6%	25.3%	26.7%

**Source:** Access Economics (2006) *Listen Hear! The economic impact and cost of hearing loss in Australia*. Data from Wilson, DH. (1997) *Hearing in South Australia: Disability, Impairment and Quality-of-life*, PhD Thesis, University of Adelaide and Australian Hearing (2005) *Demographic details and aetiology of persons under the age of 17 years with a hearing impairment who have been fitted with a hearing aid*. Unpublished report, NAL Chatswood.

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Question no: 6

OUTCOME 7: Hearing Services

Topic: HEARING HEALTH IN AUSTRALIA

Hansard Page: CA8

Senator Moore asked:

I will ask, towards the end of your evidence, about exactly what research is being done in this whole area, particularly in terms of NHMRC and ARC grants. When you say that work has been done on that issue - it is of particular interest to our committee because of our long-standing interest in mental health - what kind of work is being done on that? Are these specialist research projects? You can take that on notice.

Answer:

In relation to research on mental health and hearing impairment, currently there is no research funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council, nor funded in previous years.

Since 2005, the Australian Research Council has provided funding to support four child specific research projects examining the relationship between hearing loss and mental health issues such as development of social skills, social participation and wellbeing and happiness.

Three of these projects are still in progress. The fourth study of the personal, social and educative outcomes of cochlear implantation has been publicly reproduced on the Aussie Deaf Kids website <[www.aussiedeafkids.org.au](http://www.aussiedeafkids.org.au)>

To the Department's knowledge, any other research being undertaken in Australia on this issue is likely to be by individuals attached to Australian Universities.